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(54) Transaction authentication system

(57) A transaction authentication system comprises a microchip card and a terminal. The card has a memory for storing PIN data and transaction sequence data. A processor increments the transaction sequence data each time the card is used in a transaction, and combines and encrypts the incremented transaction sequence data and a given PIN data component to provide a unique transaction signature. The given PIN data component and the encryption key used in the generation of the transaction signature comprise a secret component personal to the user but concealed from the user and known only to the authoriser. The transaction signature and the incremented transaction sequence data are displayed/printed/transmitted. A transaction may be authenticated by means of the authoriser decoding the transaction signature using the incremented transaction sequence data and an appropriate decryption key so as to extract PIN data component material, then comparing it with that belonging to the card holder.

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At least one drawing originally filed was informal and the print reproduced here is taken from a later filed formal copy.

The claims were filed later than the filing date within the period prescribed by Rule 25(1) of the Patents Rules 1990.

TRANSACTION AUTHENTICATION SYSTEM

The present invention relates to security systems for transaction cards, and in particular to a system for authenticating individual transactions.

Transaction cards are very widely used as an alternative to cash and invariably contain various features to counteract fraudulent use thereof. The card issuers and transaction authorisors however continue to suffer substantial losses due to by counterfeiting of security features whether they be cardholder signatures, holographic devices or magnetic stripes on transaction documentation or invalid cards as appropriate. The PIN (Personal Identification Number) number is acknowledged as a useful way of reducing such losses but its usage is generally limited to Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) designed to hold securely, sensitive data such as encryption keys. PINs are not widely used at Point of Sale terminals because of the complexity of managing them adequately in such a potentially insecure environment. Various increasingly sophisticated and complex, not to mention expensive, features continue to be added to transaction cards to minimise the possibility of tampering therewith but there remains a major technical problem in finding an effective way to authenticate individual transactions, that is, to identify and distinguish valid transactions from

and said terminal means including memory means holding an encryption key for encryption of the combined transaction sequence data and given PIN data component in a predictable manner so as to provide a unique transaction signature, at least one of said given PIN data component and the encryption key used in the generation of the transaction signature comprising a secret component personal to the user but concealed from the user and known only to the authorisor, at least one of said card and terminal means having transaction signal output means formed and arranged for providing an output signal containing the encoded transaction signature and the incremented transaction sequence data, whereby in use of the system a transaction may be authenticated by means of the authorisor decoding the encoded transaction signature using the incremented transaction sequence data and an appropriate decryption key so as to extract PIN data component material contained therein, and comparing the extracted PIN data component material with that belonging to the card holder.

Thus with a transaction authentication system of the present invention the microchip card is effectively modified in a predictable but secure manner each time it is used so that for each transaction it will function as a "new" card and generate not only an incremented

including suitable direct electrical contact means as will be further explained hereinbelow.

In one embodiment of the present invention the given PIN data component used in generating the transaction signature is simply the PIN data component known to the user and used by him/her in the normal way. In this case the secret personal encryption key will of course have to be stored on the card. In another, preferred, embodiment though there is used a secret personal PIN data component, stored on the card in addition to the user-known PIN data component, in the generation of the transaction signature. In this latter case, there may be used a "public" encryption key common to all users and possibly also common to different authorisors, and this may be stored either on the card or in the transaction card terminal means. If desired though a secret personal PIN data component system could be used in combination with a secret personal encryption key system to provide even greater security (both the secret personal PIN data component and encryption key being stored on the card).

Any suitable type of encryption key may be used including, for example, an RSA encryption key. Moreover there may be used an encryption of the type which can be used for both encoding and decoding or a more complex

card 2 of the present invention.

The I/O device 7 has a card receiving slot 8 provided with complementary electrical contact means 9a (see Fig. 3) for coupling with direct electrical contact means 9b on the card 2. Desirably the electrical contact means 9a, 9b are formed and arranged in accordance with a suitable ISO standard for microchip card readers. In addition the I/O device 7 has a visual display means conveniently in the form of an LCD device 10 and a keyboard 11 for allowing user entry of PIN data etc. As shown in Fig. 3, the keyboard 11 and display device 10 are connected to an I/O device processor 13 which is also connected to a "hard copy" printer device 14, and to the communications unit 6.

The card 2 as shown in Fig. 2 has a processor 15 connected to the card contact means 9b and also to memory storage means comprising a first memory (conveniently E^2PROM type) 16 for storing both user-known and secret personal PIN data components, second memory means conveniently (in the form of ROM type memory) 17 for storing encryption and other programs used in the operation of the card (see below), and third memory means (conveniently of RAM type) 18 for holding transaction sequence data.

means of the encryption key (which may be of any suitable kind e.g. an RSA type key) held in the second memory means 17 so as to generate a transaction signature in a suitable format such as a 512 bit string of cyphertext. Again the combination of the transaction sequence data with the SCRV may be in a simple arithmetical manner or, more desirably, in accordance with a more or less complex algorithm in order to increase the overall security of the process.

The card processor 15 then sends the incremented transaction sequence data and the encoded transaction signature to the I/O device processor 13 which then displays these on the I/O device display 10 for transcription by the terminal means operator and subsequent return to the card authorisor as and when required to authenticate the transaction concerned. In view of the length and complexity of the transaction signature, in practice only part, e.g the first 8 characters. i.e. the hexadecimal representation of the first 32 bits of the cyphertext would normally be used in this type of operational mode. Alternatively or additionally the incremented transaction sequence number and the encoded transaction signature are output to the printer 14 for recording with other conventional transaction data on the till receipt 19 or other transaction documentation, with conveniently one copy

display of a message on the display means 7 acknowledging or rejecting the authenticity of the transaction.

Various modifications may be made to the above system without departing from the scope of the present invention. Thus other conventional security features such as holograms may be employed on the surface of the card. Also the microchip should desirably be embedded in the card in such a way as to substantially prevent the possibility of replacement of the card without serious damage to the card. Furthermore there could be used an encryption key which would allow subsequent decryption of the encoded transaction signature at different levels, e.g. decryption of the full signature with a simplified public or general decryption key and decryption of part (only) of the signature using a full secret decryption key which may moreover be personal to the individual card holder.

an encryption key for encryption of the combined transaction sequence data and given PIN data component in a predictable manner so as to provide a unique transaction signature, at least one of said given PIN data component and the encryption key used in the generation of the transaction signature comprising a secret component personal to the user but concealed from the user and known only to the authorisor, at least one of said card and terminal means having transaction signal output means formed and arranged for providing an output signal containing the encoded transaction signature and the incremented transaction sequence data, whereby in use of the system a transaction may be authenticated by means of the authorisor decoding the encoded transaction signature using the incremented transaction sequence data and an appropriate decryption key so as to extract PIN data component material contained therein, and comparing the extracted PIN data component material with that belonging to the card holder.

2. A system according to claim 1 wherein said terminal card interface means is in the form of direct electrical contact means.

3. A system according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein said PIN data component is the PIN data component known to the user.

10. A system as claimed in claim 1 wherein said card has incorporated therein magnetic stripe emulation usable in a substantially conventional magnetic reader transaction terminal.

11. A transaction authentication system substantially as described hereinbefore with particular reference to Figs. 1 to 3 of the accompanying drawings.

Category	Identity of document and relevant passages	Relevant to claim(s.

Categories of documents

X: Document indicating lack of novelty or of inventive step.

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